

from the pen of Plumer Ward.¹ With all his assurance Disraeli was by nature sensitive, and this was his first taste of the malignant abuse which was to be showered upon him all through life and against which experience was to make him proof. There is an obvious reminiscence of the effect upon the victim's mind in the well known passage in which Contarini Fleming describes his sensations after reading the review of his novel *Manstein* : —

With, what horror, with, what supreme, appalling astonishment, did I find myself for the first time in my life a subject of the most ruthless, the most malignant, and the most adroit ridicule. I was scarified. I was scalped. . . . The criticism fell from ray hand, a film floated over my vision; my knees trembled. I felt that sickness of heart that we experience in our first serious scrape. I was ridiculous, it was time to die.

Yet in spite of the critics, perhaps to some extent because of their violence and acerbity, which revived the interest of the public as it began to flag, *Vivian Grey* survived. 'There was little art in my creation,' says Contarini of an early composition, 'but there was much vitality,' and the description exactly fits the first part

¹ *Literary Magnet*, Vol. II., pp. 1 and 129. From the same writer the legends took their origin that Disraeli had been the first editor of *The Representative* and responsible for its failure ; and that he had also been, editor of *The Star Chamber*, a weekly publication which appeared for a couple of months in the spring of 1826, and author of the 'Dunciad of To-day,' a satirical poem which was printed in *The Star Chamber* and provoked much resentment. The statement about *The Representative*, as we have seen, was not true. As for *The Star Chamber*, it was founded by a certain Peter Hall, a friend of Meredith's at Brasenose, who, through Meredith, had become acquainted with Disraeli. Disraeli contributed some fables with a political application under the title of 'The Modern JEsop,'¹ at least one review, and perhaps other matter. But in later life he expressly denied (*The Times*, Nov. 3, 1871; *Leisure Hour*, Nov. 4, 1871) having been editor, if indeed there ever was an editor ; and in the second part of *Vivian Grey* (Bk. V. ch. 1) he declared, with obvious reference to the 'Dunciad,' that he never wrote a single line 'of the various satires in verse' that had been attributed to him, and the internal evidence is in complete agreement with this repudiation.